

The effect of this new responsibility on the black female was thus two-fold. First, as discussed earlier in this essay, the women now had to contend with the difficulties and the unfairness that was inherent in the work experience of freedwomen in the South.

They would be exposed to the beatings, the sexual abuse, and the lost pay. Second, black women would have to work harder than ever in order to complete all the tasks that they now had committed themselves to; “part of the price [for freedom] was enormously long hours, for black women ended up working in the fields when they were needed-as they often were-in addition to their work at home.” The freedwomen, however, did not complain about the extra effort. They saw the negatives of extra work as being strongly counteracted by the positives of family life. These women now had their freedom, their husbands, and their children, and were not going to permit some inconveniences to stand in the way of their happiness.

Family identity was a strong presence in the African American woman’s life. She was willing to travel any distance or make any effort to regain lost family members or recreate a new family structure. After she rebuilt or created her family, she was willing to sacrifice all the time that she had in her life, whether it was by working, staying home, or as in most cases, both. She would spend all day laboring in the fields or in an employer’s dwelling, and then come home and take care of her house, her children, and her husband. The freedwoman’s dedication to the institution of family displays the importance of this part of her identity.

[Sexual
Identity
Gender
Identity](#)

[Back to original article.](#)

[Last Updated: 8/12/16](#)

The Identity of Black Women in the Post-Bellum Period 1865-1885

Carl

Greenfeld

Gender

Identity

The gender identity of southern black women was also important in the post-bellum period. The voting movement among freedwomen will be used as an example of how women fought for their rights as females, and as African Americans, as well as showing their proclivity for doing what they believed was best for them and their family. In this period, black women believed that the right to vote, whether it was for

them or for black men, was the key to their continued freedom. They looked at suffrage as a means to an end. Much of the importance of suffrage after the Civil War was polarized around the newly proposed fifteenth amendment.

The battle for the right to vote was a good example of the gender identity of black women after the Civil War. In this time period, the battle for the black woman's right to vote revolved around the fifteenth amendment. The fifteenth amendment, first proposed in 1868, was to guarantee black men the right to vote. There were two camps, however, that disagreed upon the proposed wording and effect of this amendment. There were those women who fought for the right of black men to vote, with black women waiting their turn. There were also those women who believed that they deserved the right to vote without delay. Those who wanted to wait believed that "women should step back and wait their turn, lest they jeopardize the fate of men who so desperately needed political power." In fact, Eric Foner, a professor of history at Columbia University states, "most black women seem to have agreed that the enfranchisement of black men would represent a major step forward for the entire black community." These women believed that their interests could best be provided for by first making sure that black men achieved the right to vote. The other group of women believed that the right to vote for black women, as well as for black men, should be included within the fifteenth amendment and should be immediate. Many of these women attended rallies or tried to register to vote. They were not content with allowing black men to acquire the right to vote first, as they believed they were equal citizens and therefore should have equal privileges.

Although there were different views on whether women should fight for the immediate right to vote, there was an important similarity between views. Each group believed that they were doing what was in the best interests of the black woman in this time period. The question of the rightness or wrongness of these groups is immaterial. Both groups showed their strength of character and belief in doing what was most advantageous for their race and gender, regardless of the position that they took on this issue. The women who wanted to wait believed it was more important to make sure that black men got suffrage so that they would have a political base of power for their family. Those who wanted immediate suffrage believed that the only way to guarantee their freedom was through instantaneous suffrage for all, whether white or black, male or female. Either way one observed it, the issue involved was one of continued freedom and long term prosperity. Ultimately, in 1870, the fifteenth amendment was passed and only black men were given the right to vote. The important issue, however, was that "black women had not been granted the vote along with their husbands and fathers. But they did manage to make their presence known." They showed that they would fight for what they believed was important in their lives, even if it included disagreeing with other members of the same race or sex.

There is one more point to be made on the gender identity of these black women. Only one specific example, the women's suffrage movement, has been given in this essay to show the gender identity of the freedwomen in this time period. The gender identity of these women, however, is also composed of the three identities, (work, sexual, and family) that have been discussed previously in this essay. The examples such as lower pay at work, sexual abuse, and being expected to take care of the home, are all experiences and responsibilities that were forced upon the African American woman and which contributed to her gender identity. This concept is important because it shows that not all the identities that were representative of black women in this era were mutually exclusive, but worked together and in combination with each other. Although it might appear in this essay that each of the identities presented only exist apart from one another, they are indeed connected.

The southern black woman went through many hardships with the conclusion of the Civil War. At the outset of this time period, the freedwoman learned "that emancipation was only the first step on the road to freedom, not the last, and the obstacles along the way would be formidable." These women were forced to work for little pay, sexually abused, forced to recreate and support their families, and were exposed to a multitude of other degradations and insulting practices in their lives. The constant throughout these experiences, however, was the strength and grace that these African American women displayed through these living conditions. If she was compensated less than she deserved or was showed disrespect on the job, she either quit or went on strike until she secured what was rightfully hers. If her family had been sold away during the age of slavery, she would go wherever necessary in order to reclaim them. These women had the strength of character that was necessary to toil in the fields or in an employer's home all day, but would then allow them to journey home and care for their husbands and children.

One would most likely describe these women and their identity as both strong and persistent. The result of their experiences, their responsibilities, and ultimately their identity was their ability to accept the difficulties in their lives, knowing that this acceptance was the key to living the kind of life they coveted. These women learned to fight the battles that they could and postpone the battles that would harm their future prospects for happiness. The identity of these women was not one of subservience to the more powerful white establishment, but one of attaining the necessary freedom in life that made the African American woman content. Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson put it best when they said, "they [southern black women] were willing to pay a high price for these things, so crucial to the sense of freedom." The southern black woman worked unmercifully and accepted the burden of being an African-American woman in the South in order to acquire the freedom that was so important to her.

Universal Churches and the Role of Religion in Arnold J. Toynbee's A Study of History

Phyllis

Amenda

Introduction

Religion has always been one of the universal attributes of human society. All civilizations look for an explanation of how the world works and try to decipher their own place in that world. No world historian should attempt to study either individual societies or a global society without seriously studying the place that the search for the divine has played in the human story.

Arnold J. Toynbee paid particular attention to the role of religion in the later volumes of his twelve volume work, A Study of History. He became particularly interested in the relationship between what he called universal religions and universal states.

Toynbee's interest in religion mirrored the publication history of *A Study of History*. Volumes I-VI were published in 1939 and have little mention of religion as Toynbee develops his civilizational paradigm. The next four volumes, VII-X, were published fifteen years after the first six, in 1954. Toynbee makes no secret of the fact that the war changed his outlook on civilizations and their history. His writing on religion is a significant part of this change, some might say that Toynbee becomes obsessed with religion, but there certainly is no doubt that religious concerns become a dominant theme in the later volumes of *A Study of History*. To understand Toynbee's understanding of religion, this paper will first summarize the role of religion in the first six volumes of the work and then undertake an analysis of the section on "Universal Churches" in Volume VII.

Basic concepts in *A Study of History*

In the first six volumes of his history, Toynbee lays out his "Challenge-Response- Mimesis" paradigm, concentrating on the Challenge and Response phases in Volumes I-III. Volumes IV through VI deal with the breakdown of civilizations. In the first three volumes, there is little mention of religion, except as a characteristic of a given civilization. In Volumes IV-VI, Toynbee begins to look at what makes civilizations decline. "The Disintegrations of Civilizations" is Toynbee's title for the fifth section of his work which comprises both Volumes V and VI. In Volume V, Toynbee begins

to look at various social groups which comprise a civilization, particularly, “external” as well as “internal proletariats.”

In using the term, “proletariats,” Toynbee draws on the Latin etymology:

derived from a Latin word coined for the statistical purposes of the Roman census to describe a category of Roman citizens ‘who had nothing but their children to enter in their returns as their contribution to the common weal.’

Proletariats, as conceived of by Toynbee, are those who are on the outside; those who are not in control or who have a large stake maintaining the social order.

[A] social element or group which in some way is ‘in’ but not ‘of’ any given society at any given stage of society’s history . . . The true hall-mark of the proletarian is neither poverty nor humble birth but a consciousness—and the resentment which this consciousness inspires. . .

This consciousness can be exhibited by groups both geographically within as well as without the society.

External proletariats are those who have geographically separated from the society by some act of withdrawal with a clearly defined frontier separating them from the dominant minority. Toynbee usually characterizes the external proletariat as “primitive” or “barbarian war bands.” The barbarian hordes provide an external threat to a disintegrating society and will continue to pester the society from without until they can break through its defenses and conquer. Their ultimate victory will occur when the society is sufficiently weakened from within that it cannot fight off the external threat any longer.

This internal weakening will be the result of class warfare between the dominant minority and the internal proletariat. Toynbee’s concept of the internal proletariat is much closer to the conventional meaning of ‘proletariat’ that we associate with Marx and socialism. In Volume V, Toynbee describes the internal proletariats of the various civilizations he has identified. In discussing the dynamics of the internal proletariats in various societies, Toynbee begins to develop his thesis that this disaffected social group plays a role in introducing new religious ideas. According to Toynbee, philosophy and the concept of public service come from the dominant minority, but “[a]mong the works of the Internal Proletariat the counterparts of the philosophies are ‘higher religions’, while the counterpart of the universal state is a universal church.”

Toynbee distinguishes between primitive and higher religions: “[F]or a primitive religion is merely one expression, among many, of the corporate life of some local

human community, whereas a 'higher religion' is the worship of a Godhead that is conceived of as transcending the whole of human life as well as the whole of the Material Universe." For Toynbee, it is the study of these higher religions and their role in civilization that will become a larger focus in the later volumes of *A Study of History*.

Breakdown and the Rise of Universal States

In Toynbee's Challenge-Response-Mimesis paradigm, creative responses to the challenges facing a society enable a society to grow. The group that leads the society through the challenges is called the creative minority by Toynbee. As long as these supermen (in the Nietzschean sense) are the impetus for the society, that society will be on the ascendant phase of its evolution. But what happens if the creative minority loses its edge, for some reason no longer has the "mystically inspired personalities" which are needed to maintain the creativity of response that gives a civilization its uniqueness? Toynbee calls this point the "breakdown" of the Challenge-Response-Mimesis paradigm. Costello defines this as "the breakdown of civilization [which] occurs in the moral failure of the leading minority and the consequent secession of their potential successors." The creative minority, through its leadership, becomes the dominant minority, but when the dominant minority loses its cultural hegemony, the response of the proletariat becomes mechanical and ritualistic. It is at this point that the internal proletariat begins seeking for a new value system, a new aspiration, to replace the rigid, unsatisfying gods that have been forced upon them by the dominant minority.

The polity that is controlled by a dominant (but no longer creative) minority is called a universal state by Toynbee. He devotes the first half of Volume VII to describing universal states. Toynbee begins Volume VII by describing the features of a universal state:

In the first place, universal states arise after, and not before, the breakdowns of the civilizations to whose bodies social they bring political unity. They are not summers but 'Indian Summers', masking autumn and presaging winter. In the second place, they are the products of dominant minorities: that is, of once creative minorities that have lost their creative power . . .

Toynbee goes on to quote a lengthy passage by Amand Bazard which states that the hallmark of their establishment is negativeness. A third feature is that universal states are the answer of the society to "a Time of Troubles" which earns the gratitude of the populace by establishing order and seemingly stopping the disintegration of the society.

The paradox of universal states is that they appear to be immortal just at the moment they are about to commit euthanasia and succumb to an alien intruder. For examples, one needs only look at the Roman Empire or the British Raj in India. By the time they appeared immortal, they had already swallowed the poison of their ultimate demise. If Toynbee views the universal state as civilization in decline, does he see any positive virtue to them? He finds two purposes of the universal state. The first is as peacemaker. "Whereas parochial states prey on one another . . . universal states come into existence to put a stop to wars and to substitute co-operation for bloodshed." The second purpose is to spend itself in service to others. The second purpose raises the question: Who are its beneficiaries of this service? Toynbee answers that there are only three choices, a contemporary alien civilization, its external proletariat or its internal proletariat, "and in serving the internal proletariat a universal state will be ministering to one of the higher religions that make their epiphany in the internal proletariat's bosom."

It is in serving the higher religions that find a home in the internal proletariat that universal states find their highest purpose in Toynbee's thinking. But how do universal states provide the conditions (or services) that allow alien higher religions to flourish?

As mentioned above, the first benefit provided by a universal is a time of peace from both internal and external threats. Toynbee labels this benefit, "The Psychology of Peace." Toynbee claims that while eliminating fratricidal warfare, the dominant minority is unable to impose a "fancy religion" or philosophy from above, but that the "pacific atmosphere" will allow internal proletariats to establish their own religions from below upwards. Both the freedom to travel permitted by peace itself, and the communications network created by the universal state, will allow religious ideas to move in and gain a hearing in the society. Within the society, who is more willing to hear new ideas? Is it the dominant minority which seeks to maintain the existing power structure? Or is it the already alienated internal proletariat, who have no stake in the state religion or the power structure that state religion inevitably supports? The answer is obvious, while enjoying the peace established by the dominant minority, the internal proletariat is going to be willing to examine new religious ideas which will eventually challenge the dominant minority's power.

The Establishment of Higher Religions

As noted above, Toynbee does not place much emphasis on religion in the earlier volumes of *A Study of History*. However, with the publication of Volume VII in 1954, fifteen years after the publication of Volume VI, the work takes a major turn in examining the post-breakdown phase of civilizations, which Toynbee calls universal states. It is at this point in the work that Toynbee becomes focused on religion. In his

view the primary beneficiary of a universal state is unequivocally the universal religion that arises from it. Halfway through Volume VII, Toynbee begins a new section entitled "Universal Churches." It is in this section that the change in Toynbee's thought after World War II becomes more pronounced. While still discussing past civilizations and attempting to find a universal paradigm of development, it is clear that Toynbee's focus has shifted to the spiritual side of human existence.

One reason for Toynbee's emphasis on religion is the rejection he saw in post-war intellectual thought of spiritual values. He argues that man has discarded the worship of primitive nature for the worship of "the man-god Caesar" and has transformed nature "from an object of worship into an object of exploitation." The antidote for such idolatry is the message of the higher religions.

The message of the higher religions had been that Man, like Nature, is not God but is God's creature; and this message had won Man's ear at the moment when the collapse of a man-made mundane civilization had been demonstrating to Man the limitations of his power through the first-hand evidence of a painful and humbling experience

While this could obviously be true of the fall of the Roman Empire, it could equally be true of post-war England.

Parasitic Religion

Another reason that Toynbee emphasizes the positive role of higher religions in the human story is that he wants to refute modern scholarship that denigrates religion, especially Christianity. He opens the beginning of the book on "Universal Churches" with a section entitled, "Churches as Cancers." Toynbee admits that because the universal churches that have developed out of the higher religions are the primary beneficiaries of the universal states, they might be perceived as a parasite on that site, sucking the life out of it until the universal state drops dead. But he counters that "[t]his diagnosis is as attractive as it is exacerbating; for it is always easier, both intellectually and morally, to debit one's ills to the account of some outside agency than to ascribe responsibility to oneself." He then spends the next ten pages debunking two well known scholars who attack Christianity as being an outside parasite, Edward Gibbon and Sir James George Frazer.

Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published in 1789. Toynbee sums up all seventy-one chapters with a nine word quotation, "I have described the triumph of Barbarism and Religion." Because Gibbon sees that the decline of the Empire was synonymous with rise of Christianity, he concludes that the latter is responsible for the former. Toynbee rebuts Gibbon by

claiming that Gibbon misread the point of breakdown in the Roman Empire. The Empire (or as Toynbee would say, the Hellenic civilization) had passed the point of breakdown long before the entrance of Christianity. Without the breakdown of Hellenic civilization, Christianity and other Oriental religions would have found no market in Rome for their ideas.

Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* takes what is implicit in Gibbon about the parasitic nature of Christianity and expands the concept. Toynbee includes a lengthy quotation from *The Golden Bough* in which Frazer claims that Oriental religions completely undermined the "conception of the subordination of the individual to the community" and replaced it with the "selfish and immoral doctrine" of individual salvation. The selection quoted by Toynbee ends with hope that with the revival of classicism in the Renaissance and post-Renaissance eras will restore Roman virtue in the modern world. According to Frazer:

The revival of Roman Law, of the Aristotelian philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages marked the return of Europe to native ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world. The long halt in the march of civilization was over. The tide of Oriental invasion had turned at last. It is ebbing still.

To which Toynbee ironically replies,

It was indeed still ebbing . . . on the 4th March, 1948...the present writer was wondering what that gentle scholar would have had to say . . . about some of the ways in which Europe's return to 'native ideals of life and conduct' had manifested itself during the forty-one years that had now passed since . . . 1907.

Toynbee sees a straight line between the "rational, unenthusiastic" neo-paganism of Gibbon and Frazer to the "demonic, emotional, violent-handed" neo-pagans of Hitler's Germany.

Toynbee argues that the love of God and love of Man are joined together in all the higher religions and therefore doing one will require doing the other. The difference between the pagan and the Christian (or the Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist) is that the Christian can see beyond his own small kingdom to the world as a totality. By seeking the will of God on earth, the Christian is shooting for a larger goal than the small-minded pagan, and therefore has a greater chance at hitting at least some part of that target. He quotes Robert Browning, "Ah, but a man's reach should exceed his grasp, / Or what's a heaven for?"

As an example of that goal of serving man by serving God, Toynbee gives an account of Saint Daniel the Stylite, a Syrian anchorite, who left his pillar and journeyed to

Constantinople to save the Christian faith, and thereby the Empire, and compares this example to the Hindu sage, Purun Baghat, who left his hermitage to warn villagers of an impending landslide, thus saving their lives. Both holy men sought to live in isolation to better contemplate the divine, but when their fellow man needed them, they gladly returned to the world to serve their fellow man, and thereby gain a fuller understanding of divine providence.

Having made his case against Gibbon and Frazer that religion is not a parasite on the universal state, Toynbee seeks to explore the possibility that religion may actually be a “higher species of society.” To understand what Toynbee means by that, we first need to understand what Toynbee means by “higher religions” and the role those religions have played in the evolution of society.

Religion and Society

In his chapter, “Churches as a Higher Species of Society,” Toynbee differentiates between what he calls “lower religions” and “higher religions.” These different stages of religious development have different types of relationships with the dominant minority and the state apparatus they exist under. Furthermore, these two stages have different relationships with rationalism and rationalism’s study of science. In studying these stages and why the conflict with rationalism is important, Toynbee makes a very powerful polemic for man’s need of religious truth and worship.

Lower Religions

As mentioned earlier, Toynbee identifies lower religions as a local phenomenon while higher religions view the deity as a global unity, concerned about all mankind, not just an individual tribe or nation. Toynbee argues that lower, primitive religions are the by-product of parochial states, but “the establishment of universal states obliterates the *raison d’être* of these religions. . .” There was no concept of personal choice in belief because the point of lower religions is not orthodox belief, but orthodox praxis. Toynbee explains: “The pith of Primitive Religion is not belief but action, and the test of conformity is not assent to a theological creed but participation in ritual performances.”

The emphasis on praxis over belief is why Toynbee believes that there is no disagreement between philosophy (the search for intellectual truth) and religion as defined by ritual. The people in primitive societies understand that their creation myths are “not statements concerning matter of fact that can be labeled ‘true’ or ‘false’.” Therefore the philosopher who does make statements which have truth claims suffers no collision with the dominant minority “so long as the philosopher continues to carry out his hereditary religious duties.” Toynbee’s example is